



Commonwealth of Kentucky Public Protection Cabinet

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Be Fire Smart this Holiday Season ***Kentucky State Fire Marshal Offers Fire Prevention Safety Tips***

Frankfort, Ky. (Dec. 7, 2012) – Holiday cooking, Christmas trees, candles and holiday decorations significantly contribute to the seasonal causes of home fires, said Kentucky State Fire Marshal Bill Swope, director of the state Division of Fire Prevention.

“The holiday season can remain festive and fun by taking preventative steps and following simple rules of thumb to prevent home fires,” said Swope. “My advice is to stay in your kitchen while cooking, consider using flameless candles and follow the rules for placing and lighting your Christmas tree.”

Swope said that most cooking fires involve the stovetop so keep anything that can catch fire away from it, turn off the stove when you leave the kitchen – even if it’s for a short period of time – and use a timer to remind you that you’re cooking.

December is the peak month for home candle fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and Swope recommends giving flameless candles a try. “But if you use traditional candles, keep them at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn, and blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed. Never leave a child alone in a room with a burning candle.”

According to NFPA, U.S. fire departments respond to about 230 home fires cause by Christmas trees each year. One of every three is caused by electrical problems and one in five resulted from a heat source that’s too close to the tree. Swope offers the following advice on tree safety:

- Choose a tree with fresh needles that do not fall off when touched.
- Before placing a tree in a stand, cut 1 to 2 inches from the base of the trunk.
- Place the tree at least 3 feet away from any heat source, including fireplaces, heat vents, radiators, candles and even lights.
- Use strings of light that have the label of an independent testing laboratory.

- Do not block exits with your Christmas tree.
- Add water to the tree stand daily.
- Do not use lit candles to decorate your tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- When needles begin dropping off your live tree, get rid of it. Many communities have recycling programs for the disposal of trees.
- Your neighbors will thank you by taking down your outside lights and storing them for the next year. Decorations left outside can become hazards.

The Division of Fire Prevention is an agency of the Department of Housing, Buildings and Construction within the Public Protection Cabinet.